

A Healthy Mouth



for Your Baby

U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion & Preventive Medicine

Directorate of Health Promotion and Wellness Oral Fitness Program
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"What are you doing?" asked Ann. Ann and her friend, Maria, were watching Maria's children play.

"I'm cleaning my baby's teeth," said Maria.

"But your baby hardly has any teeth!" said Ann.

"Yes, but my dentist said there are things I can do to keep my baby from getting tooth decay," said Maria.

"But don't baby teeth just fall out?" asked Ann.

"Yes, but tooth decay can cause pain for the baby. And baby teeth hold space for adult teeth," said Maria.



"What else did the dentist say?" asked Ann.

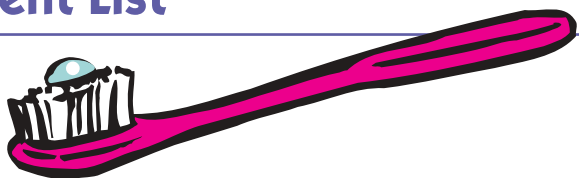
"She told me how fluoride protects teeth. She also said to feed my baby healthy foods and not to put my baby to bed with a bottle," said Maria.

"When do you have to start taking care of a baby's teeth?" asked Ann.

"As soon as they come in. Teeth can decay as soon as they appear in the mouth," said Maria.

"I'll have to start thinking of those things soon!" laughed Ann.

Content List



Before your baby is born 5

Protect Your Baby’s Teeth With Fluoride 6

Check and Clean Your Baby’s Teeth 7

Feed Your Baby Healthy Food 8

How can I find out if there is hidden sugar in foods? 9

Prevent Baby Bottle Tooth Decay 10

Take Your Child To the Dentist 11

Before your baby is born—

What you eat when you are pregnant is important. Eating right will help you and your growing baby stay healthy. A baby's teeth start forming during pregnancy. Good nutrition is important for your unborn baby's teeth to develop properly. Follow your doctor's advice for eating the right foods and taking vitamins.

It's also time to think about how you'll feed your baby. Remember, breast-feeding is best!



Protect Your Baby's Teeth With Fluoride

Fluoride (said like floor-eyed) protects teeth from tooth decay and helps heal early decay.

- Fluoride is in the drinking water of many towns and cities.

Ask your dentist or doctor if your water has fluoride in it. If it doesn't, talk to your dentist or doctor about giving you a prescription for fluoride drops for your baby.



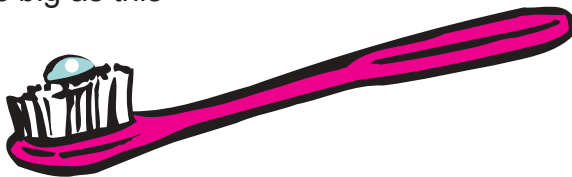
Check and Clean Your Baby's Teeth

Check your baby's teeth

Healthy teeth should be all one color. If you see spots or stains on the teeth, take your baby to your dentist.

Clean your baby's teeth as soon as they come in with a clean, soft cloth or a baby's toothbrush. Clean the teeth at least once a day. It's best to clean them right before bedtime.

At about age 2, most of your child's teeth will be in. Now you can start brushing them with a small drop of fluoride toothpaste. Use a drop of toothpaste about as big as this—



Young children cannot get their teeth clean by themselves. Until they are 7 or 8 years old, you will need to help them brush. Try brushing their teeth first and then letting them finish. And be sure that you put the toothpaste on the brush—use only a pea-sized amount of toothpaste.

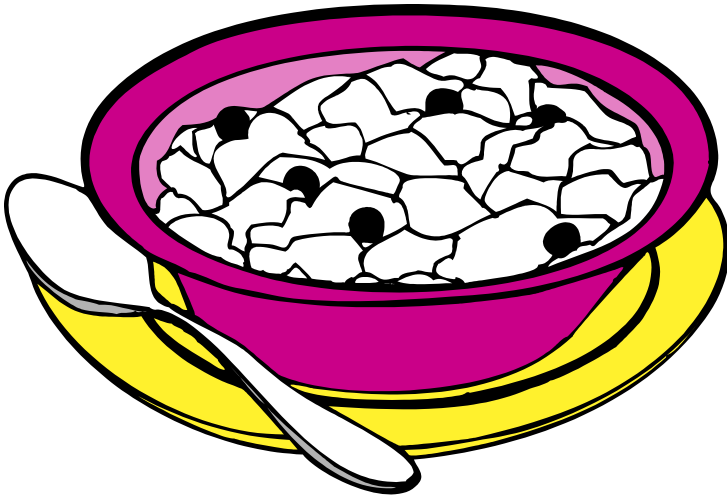
Feed Your Baby Healthy Food

Invisible germs called bacteria live in your mouth all the time. When you put sugar in your mouth, the bacteria gobble up the sweet stuff and turn it into acids. These acids cause tooth decay.

Choose foods for your baby that do not have a lot of sugar in them. Give your child fruits and vegetables instead of candy and cookies. Examples of other healthy snacks are: Toast, Cheese, Crackers, Pretzels, Applesauce (without sugar), Dry cereal (without sugar), and Yogurt



How can I find out if there is hidden sugar in foods?



Read the label to see how much sugar is in the food. If sugar is one of the first three ingredients on the list, then the product contains a lot of sugar.

Any of the following names can be used on the list of ingredients to describe sugar: Refined sugar, Corn syrup, Lactose, Glucose, Nutritive sweetener, Natural sweetener, Fructose, Sucrose, Honey, Dextrose, Malt, and Molasses

Prevent Baby Bottle Tooth Decay

Do not put your baby to bed with a bottle at night or at nap time. *(If you put your baby to bed with a bottle, fill it only with **water**.)*



Milk, formula, juices, and other sweet drinks such as soda all have sugar in them. Sucking on a bottle filled with liquids that have sugar in them can cause tooth decay. Decayed teeth can cause pain and can cost a lot to fill.

- During the day, do not give your baby a bottle filled with sweet drinks to use like a pacifier.
- If your baby uses a pacifier, do not dip it in anything sweet like sugar or honey.
- Near his first birthday, you should teach your child to drink from a cup instead of a bottle.



Take Your Child To the Dentist

Ask your dentist when to bring your child in for his first visit. Usually, the dentist will want to see a child by his first birthday.

At this first visit, your dentist can quickly check your child's teeth.



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